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Parallel Silences: Gendered Repression And Resistance In The Short Fiction Of Ama Ata Aidoo And The Indian Progressive Writers

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Abstract
This paper provides a cross-cultural comparative analysis of Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and "The Message" and two iconic short stories from India's Progressive Writers' Movement, Ismat Chughtai's "Lihaaf" and "My Friend, My Enemy". The study utilises a feminist-progressive framework to show that silence, emotional repression, and institutional abandonment act as narrative strategies that tell the stories of women and emotionally burdened people. Through close textual analysis of the primary narratives, the paper disposes of the idea that silence is simply a manifestation of suffering, positing instead that silence is a complex form of resistance and interior expression. The protagonists, Yaaba, Begum Jaan, Esi and Chughtai's narrator, move through spaces of domesticity and ideology in which love, justice or emotional recognition are denied. From the grotesque movements of a quilt, to a child's tearless endurance, to a comrade's smouldering regret, each of the stories shows how postcolonial and patriarchal systems render absence the only form of human connection. By setting out these transnational literary echoes, then, the paper highlights how African and Indian progressive writers reconfigure silence as both trauma and testimony, refusing erasure through formal experiment and emotional realism.
Keywords: *Ama Ata Aidoo, Ismat Chughtai, Gendered silence, Progressive literature, Transnational feminist fiction*

1. INTRODUCTION

Gender, silence, and resistance form an enduring nexus of the literary traditions of the Global South. In the postcolonial context, female writers engaged with social questions have used fiction not merely to narrate but to interrogate the systems of power, patriarchy, colonial legacy, and class oppression. This comparative study places side by side two literatures with starkly divergent cultural contexts, but which share some thematic commonalities, Ghanaian author Ama Ata Aidoo's short fiction, and one of the key figures from the Indian Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM), Ismat Chughtai. Its thematic pairs are Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and Chughtai's "Lihaaf", and Aidoo's "The Message" and Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy."This comparative engagement between these two literary traditions stems from their aesthetic convergence with feminist and progressive purposes and ends. Even writing from disparate geopolitical landscapes, the works of Aidoo and Chughtai share an imperative to expose social inequities and to give voice to silenced subjects with literary realism, emotional interiority and subversive narrative form. Aidoo's oeuvre has been critically acclaimed for foregrounding the lived experiences of Ghanaian women, particularly in the context of decolonisation and modernisation (Stratton, 1994; Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997). In a similar vein, Indian Progressive writers such as Chughtai, who sought to unite Marxist humanism with a critique of culture, aimed to use accessible and politically charged storytelling to undo feudal, patriarchal, and colonial structures (Rahman, 1993; Zaheer, 2006).In Aidoo's "The Late Bud," Yaaba, a young girl in a village in rural Ghana, is almost smothered by maternal neglect and by gendered expectations. Chughtai's "Lihaaf," although taking place in the context of a North Indian feudal household, is nevertheless a reflection of this story of repression through the eyes of a young narrator, observing the sexual and emotional abandonment of a woman stranded in a loveless marriage. In contrast, the blunt "The Message" and "My Friend, My Enemy" examine emotional collapse in public mnemonics, medical and political, respectively. Both stories feature protagonists faced with the failure of systems they once believed in, a grieving mother unable to reach her child's body and a disillusioned activist witnessing the moral collapse of revolutionary camaraderie.The study's main claim is that rather than merely the

symptom of oppression, these stories wield silence—emotional, social and institutional-as a narrative device used to resist, expose and ultimately undercut structures of power. Through exploration of these formative metaphors by which female and emotional subjectivity is organised in different sociopolitical realities, this paper mutually links West African and South Asian literary articulations through an intersectional feminist-progressive lens.Its methodology draws on close textual analysis coupled with comparative thematic synthesis as informed by postcolonial feminist theory and progressive literary criticism. It examines how narrative silence, spatial imagery, and voice serve as instruments of both oppression and resistance, allowing for a new reading of how authors from two continents express struggles against intersecting systems of domination.The author appeals to transnational solidarities within Global South literature in this paper, seeking to draw on the growing body of scholarship that goes beyond the confines of national literatures. In bringing Aidoo into conversation with Chughtai, it not only draws out thematic affinities but places these writers within a collective literary genealogy of resistance, realism, and renewal.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The thematic and ideological preoccupations of Ama Ata Aidoo and the Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM) in India have been the subject of a number of discrete academic studies, albeit within particularly feminist, postcolonial, and realist literary traditions. But studies that juxtapose African and Indian progressive authors are still scarce. This literature review introduces major works on Aidoo and PWM writers (especially Ismat Chughtai), analyses common literary frameworks, and gives attention to the gap that this study fills.

2.1 Ama Ata Aidoo and Feminist Realism in African Literature

Ama Ata Aidoo is considered a pioneer of African feminist writing, praised for her sensitive portrayals of rural and urban women who grapple with the postcolonial experience. For interpreters like Stratton, Aidoo thus goes about reconfiguring nationalist discourse by redirecting it on feminine subjectivity that is, through a lens that undermines the patriarchal construction of African literature (Stratton, 1994, p. 90). Similarly, Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi highlights Aidoo's ability to balance cultural specificity with feminist critique, stating that her work "examines how women negotiate tradition, modernity, and patriarchy through intimate, often silenced, forms of resistance" (Nfah-Abbenyi, 1997, p. 117).In No Sweetness Here, Aidoo employs tributaries of domestic realism, oral storytelling traditions and emotional interiority to reveal the micro-aggressions and structural inequalities that inform women's existence. "The Late Bud" and "The Message," in particular, provide vivid portraits of feminine suffering, maternal ambivalence and emotional collapse, all set within a deeply local yet, to the universal circles of late 20th century experience, relatable narrative form.

2.2 The Indian Progressive Writers' Movement: Ideology and Literary Form

The Progressive Writers' Movement (PWM), launched in India in 1936, was a pioneering literary-political movement that sought to combat colonialism, feudalism and gender oppression using art and literature as its weapons. The likes of Sajjad Zaheer, Premchand, and Ismat Chughtai conceived of literature as a means to bring about social transformation, inspired by Marxist-humanist ideals (Zaheer, 2006, p. 44). The PWM argued that literature must not serve merely to mirror reality, but to critique and challenge it. Ismat Chughtai's work represents a feminist strand of the PWM. One of her short stories, "Lihaaf," ignited a firestorm in conservative circles because of its subtle portrayal of female same-sex desire and marital neglect. As scholars such as Amina Yaqin and Anisur Rahman (1993) observe, feminist realism was "strategic, suggestive, and often cloaked in humour and irony" and, as such, helped her evade censorship while delivering criticisms of patriarchy (p. 88)."My Friend, My Enemy" provides a masculinist progressive disillusionment, particularly in which it dramatises the ideological ruin of political idealism by replaying the knottiness of comradeship.

2.3 Across Continental Feminist and Progressive Connections

While much scholarship has pursued either Aidoo's feminist narratives or the Indian PWM's political radicalism, comparative frameworks that explore the common ground between African and Indian progressive literature are still lacking. Scholars like Elleke Boehmer and Priyamvada Gopal are already

calling for more transnational methodologies within postcolonial studies, and especially strategies that emphasise South–South intellectual affinities (Gopal, 2005, p. 19). This paper answers that call by comparing two literary traditions that, despite the cultural difference, share a strong emphasis on realism, resistance, and reform.Moreover, although feminist critics have examined representations of female desire, repression, and domestic space in Chughtai and Aidoo, the structural silences and emotional ruptures in these texts as comparative objects of resistance have gone largely unexamined. That is also the case with the institutional and ideological breakdown portrayed in "The Message" and "My Friend, My Enemy."

2.4 Identified Gap

This review indicates that, although the writers of Aidoo and PWM have previously received substantial scholarly attention, the thinking that has motivated the ideological convergence of Aidoo and PWM writers, as well as the strategic narratives that they create, have not been examined in a comparative context. No research so far pairs Aidoo's short stories with those of Indian progressives to investigate how gender, silence, space, and realism intersect in the postcolonial resistance literature.By placing both Aidoo and the PWM in a common lineage of literary resistance in the Global South, this study thus bridges an important scholarly gap with a feminist, realist, and politically engaged scholarship, assimilating a richly comparative, cross-cultural reading of Aidoo's writing.

3. Pair One Analysis: Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and Chughtai's "Lihaaf"

This part engages in comparative readings of Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and Ismat Chughtai's "Lihaaf", highlighting the emotional and social invisibility that surrounds women and girls who either resist, endure or collapse under the weight of gendered expectations. Each story shapes home life as one where silences and unmet emotional needs and repressed desires create the edifice within which the protagonists wrestle. Where Aidoo's attention features the emotional starvation and longing of the neglected child Yaaba, Chughtai foregrounds the stifled sexuality of Begum Jaan trapped inside the cage of a patriarchal marriage. Both stories create spaces in which silence is not idle but full of protest, sorrow or illicit desire.

3.1 The Emotional Despair of Being Unseen

In "The Late Bud," ten-year-old Yaaba is regularly ignored and emotionally starved by her mother, Maami. A constant language of denial. Whereas other children are lovingly called, Yaaba is reduced to an inhuman state: "You good-for-nothing, hollow-corn husk of a daughter…You moth-bitten grain" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 108). We also see her identity crisis play out through her silent questions, "Am I not my mother's child?" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 104). Her very desire to ask this out loud is muted by norms: "But one does not go round asking one's elders such questions" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 105).Chughtai's Begum Jaan, though an adult, is similarly pushed aside by her husband and deprived of affection. Her dreams remain unfulfilled, pushing her to a passionate affair with her maid, Rabbu. The narrator, a child who has been left in the care of Begum Jaan, describes what has begun to transpire under the quilt: "The elephant inside the quilt heaved up and then sat down… The quilt began to assume such grotesque shapes that I was thoroughly shaken" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 40). The grisly metaphors point toward the physical and emotional oppression roiling under a veneer of social respectability.

3.2 The Domestic Space as a Space of Exploitation

Through their portrayals of home, both Aidoo and Chughtai stage this contested space, in which patriarchal order bolsters invisibility. In "The Late Bud", Maami attacks Yaaba with her hands and accuses her of stealing when she falls in her attempt to collect red earth as a token of love: "That is why I always say you are a witch. What do you want at this time of night that you should fall on a water-bowl?" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 110).The quilt, in Chughtai's running narrative, becomes a metaphor for the unspeakable and unacknowledged acts, for repressed longings; it haunts her narrator. "I was scared stiff… the elephant started fluttering once again, and it seemed as though it was trying to squat… I stretched my leg nervously to grope for the switch… The elephant somersaulted inside the quilt" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 40). The quilt's grotesque vitality conceals taboo queer desire, forbidden by the strictures of society.

There are two relevant forms or perspectives here. The first, and truer to normative forms of narration, is that of narrative perspective or shape (of past vs. present) and of emotional/spiritual distance (of close,

reflective vs. distant, invisible narration).Aidoo employs a third-person limited narrator who closely tracks Yaaba's emotional trajectory. This technique allows readers to see Yaaba's interior life, from great hunger and isolation to her unselfish plan to go gather the red earth: "Because I want to get some red earth for my mother!" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 107). These images of her silent suffering crescendo only when she hears the words she has been longing to hear all along: "My child, my child, I thank you", —but even this acknowledgement arrives after trauma. (Aidoo, 1970, p. 113)Chughtai, meanwhile, heightens irony with a child's first-person narration. The narrator doesn't comprehend what she sees but expresses discomfort and confusion: "Thank God Rabbu returned that night… the quilt was shaking vigorously as though an elephant was struggling inside" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 40). This naivety for strategic purposes enables Chughtai to be capable of exploring repressed sexuality while obliquely showcasing it, a process which subverts censorship and stages silence as survival.

3.4 Shared themes: Repression, Resistance, Recognition

Both narratives illustrate that emotional validation is key when it comes to survival. In "The Late Bud," Yaaba's desire for recognition leads to failure: "Is Maami really calling me that? Am I Maami's own child?" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 113). Her partial recognition, though emotionally resonant, is also tragically overdue. Begum Jaan, in contrast, finds temporary respite in secret sex, but it also exacts a price. The quilt serves as a marker of not only her repression but her transgressive agency, marking her body as a site of both pain and resistance. Aidoo and Chughtai skilfully employ the home — a space both intimate and emotionally fraught — to represent female suffering, silence, and forms of subversive resistance. A child pleading for attention, a woman longing for human touch, the protagonists do not claim their power through overt rebellion, but through silent resistance, quiet defiance, and embodied metaphor. Their pain is made manifest through structure, tone and symbolic imagery — proof that what goes unsaid can be just as potent as what is spoken.

4. Pair Two Analysis: Aidoo's "The Message," Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy"

This segment provides a comparative analysis of two short stories, Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Message" and Ismat Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy", both able to speak about the emotional implosion and institutional betrayal faced by their protagonists. Both texts grapple with the modern systems — medical and ideological — that have proven insufficient to help people through their deepest grief or despair over the state of the world. Although these stories take place against very different sociopolitical backdrops, they coalesce on the theme of personal loss in the shadow of systemic failure as an agonizingly isolating experience.

4.1 The Breakdown of Maternal and Political Faith

In "The Message", Aidoo's elder protagonist, Esi Amfoa, is a grandmother who goes to Cape Coast to collect the body of her granddaughter after the girl dies giving birth. Her interiority is marked by extreme fear and alienation: "It feels so noisy in my head… I am wasting time… And so I am going…" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39). She doesn't trust the hospital system and wonders what could have been done to the body: "Horrible things I have heard done to people's bodies. Cutting them up and using them for instructions. Whereas even murderers still have decent burials" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39). This suspicion of clinical modernity is part of a wider cultural anxiety — death has been bureaucratized; grief is ritual-less. Even the medical experts seem detached: "We are looking for somebody." (Aidoo, 1970, p. 44)/ "Who? And anyway, it is none of our business." (Aidoo, 1970, p. 45) And Esi's mourning is denied its dignity, her pain met with indifference.In Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy", the narrator grieves the emotional and ideological breakdown of his friendship with Manto. "Too many things between Manto and myself have been dead for a long time. Today only a twinge remains… a heaviness in my chest like the weight of some great debt" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 211). Here, emotional betrayal becomes intertwined with ideological failure. The narrator feels guilty about the abandonment of a friend who was once a revolutionary icon.

4.2 The Failure of Institutions and Emotional Isolation

Both stories illustrate institutions — the hospitals in Ghana, the liberal literary establishment in India — as ineffectual, even cruel. Esi reflects, "If the government's people allow it, I shall bring her home" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39), suggesting that even recovering a loved one's body follows a regime of permissions. At the

hospital, she is curtly told: "Old woman, why are you crying? It is not allowed here. No one must make any noise..."— a devastating line at a place of address to life and death. (Aidoo, 1970, p. 45)

Chughtai embodies this same emotional sterility among progressives: "No one did anything. No one protested... There were no meetings, no demonstrations, and no resolutions were passed" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 209). As Manto loses himself to madness and poverty, even his brothers in ideology forsake him. Chughtai's confession —"Those who die inflict a wound that neither aches nor bleeds; it just smoulders quietly forever" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 211)— encapsulates profound, unresolved grief.

4.3 Gender, Vulnerability and Narrative Voice

Esi is a portrait of maternal pain in a system that doesn't listen to her, that won't respect her. Her potential as a grieving elder is undercut at every turn: "Do you know her European name?" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 44) She is asking, flattening her granddaughter's identity into a form of colonial bureaucracy. In retribution, when she finally sees her granddaughter's body: "The old woman somersaulted into the room and lay groaning, not screaming, by the bed" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 46). The refusal to scream says something about the interior of pain in women's bodies.And Chughtai, keeping a male narrator in mind, looks at psychological repression and survivor's guilt. He's haunted by unexpressed regret: "I don't know what this twinge is. Is it my own feeling of guilt...?" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 210). His voice is fragmented, confessional and marked by muting emotional disintegration that mirrors Esi's isolation.

4.4 Structure and Aesthetics of Collapse

Every story employs fragmented narrative styles to convey psychological unravelling. In "The Message," the dialogue alternates between gossip, monologue, and communal whispers. The vent reflects the disjointed emotional reality of Esi, her grief laced with disbelief, suspicion and ritual memory. In Chughtai's story, the non-linear narration mimics trauma — memories of Manto are conveyed in bits and pieces, suffused with ambivalence and unresolved tension.

In both cases, the endings provide no solace, redemption, only an open emotional wound. Esi, who has kept her emotional wounds and is still pregnant, long after she had seen her granddaughter return home. Even when Chughtai writes about Manto long after Manto has died, she writes him into being, what's left fixates on rather than reconciles that: it's not closure but a "quiet smouldering" that does not bow to time.Separated by culture and geography, Aidoo and Chughtai illustrate the human toll of institutional neglect and private sorrow. In "The Message," the contemporary medical system confers no dignity in death; in "My Friend, My Enemy," political comradeship does not save or even mourn the fallen. Both stories express the anguish of survivorship — of living on in a world where grief won't be acknowledged, and solidarity collapses. The silence, internal monologue and fractured memory convey the disorientation and muting that loss induces, leaving its characters suspended in an emotional limbo.

5. Comparative Synthesis

The dialectic between Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and "The Message" and Ismat Chughtai's "Lihaaf" and "My Friend, My Enemy" unveils a compelling literary strategy whereby silence, emotional repression, and institutional failure intersect female subjectivity and progressive disillusionment. Given the radically divergent cultural and historical backdrops of Ghana and India, the thematic and narrative architecture of these texts is strikingly similar.

5.1 Silence as Emotional and Political Capital

All four stories present silence as a potent—occasionally imposed, sometimes chosen—act of resistance and survival. In "The Late Bud," Yaaba's silence is both literal and figurative. She does not scream even when Maami beats her up physically. "Yaaba never cried. She only tried, without success, to ward off the blows... Her eyes misted... Soon the cloth was wet" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 109). This quiet endurance is echoed when she attempts to assist her mother by going out to find red earth on her own, exclaiming softly, "Because I want to get some red earth for my mother!". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 107)In "Lihaaf," Begum Jaan's silence belies her emotional and sexual loneliness, manifested only through the disturbingly animated quilt: "The elephant inside the quilt rose up and then sat down... the quilt began to take on such grotesque shapes that I was completely shaken" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 40). Her voice is never heard; her desires are colored, gestured or cloaked in shadows.This theme of alienation in "The Message" repeats; Esi's grief flows and is reflected off surfaces, where no one listens. She rails against social rituals of condolence: "Witches,

witches, witches... they have picked mine up while theirs prosper". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39) In Chughtai's story, the narrator admits to a lingering feeling of loss over Manto: "Too many things between Manto and myself have been dead for a long time" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 211). This mournful tone culminates in the line, "Those who die inflict a wound that neither aches nor bleeds; it just smoulders quietly forever" (Chughtai, 2001, p. 211).

5.2 Institutional and Domestic Spaces as Arenas of Repression

In Aidoo's and Chughtai's stories alike, the home is a space of emotional punishment. In "The Late Bud", Maami ridicules and physically abuses Yaaba in public: "You moth-bitten grain. I spit in your eyes, witch!" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 109). When Yaaba tries to help Maami in her last act, she is misunderstood as a thief: "That is why I always say you are a witch". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 110)

Chughtai's Begum Jaan, locked up at home by her husband, finds solace only in the company of her servant Rabbu. The quilt, the narrator says, "danced on the wall" and "assumed such grotesque shapes," suggesting an unseen world of desire suppressed by social convention.In "The Message," the hospital context dehumanises Esi's daughter, who has died after a failed delivery: "Horrible things I have heard done to people's bodies. Cutting them up and using them for instructions". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39) Similarly, in Chughtai's story, the progressive movement fails its own, refusing to be believed when Manto is persecuted and left to unravel. Just like the hospital for Esi, the ideological institution collapses.

5.3 Feminist Resistance and Emotional Labour

Aidoo's protagonists — Yaaba and Esi — shoulder the weight of unuttered emotional labour. Yaaba's identity is framed by exclusion and desire. She wonders silently, "Am I Maami's own child?" (Aidoo, 1970, p. 113) when she hears "My child" tumble from Maami's lips after her near-death experience.

Chughtai, by contrast, dramatises how, as repressive as Begum Jaan's emotions are, she manages to create a zone of forbidden intimacy. The quilt becomes a battleground of resistance. Meanwhile, it's a rare male narrator who confesses to guilt and regret, grieving the ideological rift that leaves him empty: "A twinge remains... a heaviness in my chest like the weight of some great debt". (Chughtai, 2001, p. 38)

5.4 Subtle and Suggestive Narrative Styles

All of the stories are a kind of controlled, emotionally charged minimalism. Aidoo's third-person omniscience allows us into Yaaba's inner world, while "The Message" toggles between monologue and gossip to convey the way grief splinters. Chughtai's child narrator allows for both distance and insight, as she tries to comprehend what's under the quilt. Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy" employs non-linear, memory-driven storytelling to conjure emotional residue.These narrative strategies reflect the themes of unspeakability and repression: what cannot be said is merely suggested via quilts, silence, or the lack of protest.In these four stories, Aidoo and Chughtai shaped narratives that expose the unseen, unspoken burdens of gender, grief, and ideology. Which tedious disgrace — the silent ache of a neglected child, the muffled scream under a quilt, the grief of a mother robbed of closure, the regret of a friend forced to watch a comrade decay — each story reveals that silence, when exploited by literature, becomes a weapon of repression as well as one of defiance.

6. CONCLUSION

This comparative study of Ama Ata Aidoo's "The Late Bud" and "The Message", and Ismat Chughtai's "Lihaaf" and "My Friend, My Enemy", has shown how such writers, living in different geocultural locations—West Africa and South Asia—mobilize narrative silence, emotional restraint, domestic or institutional collapse, even, to reveal gendered repression and progressive disillusionment. While they are grounded in particular socio-historical contexts—post-coloniser Ghana and pre-/post-partition India—all four texts foreground how the apparatuses of family, marriage, medicine, and ideology routinely fail the neediest subjects, especially women and those tasked with picking up the emotional slack.In "The Late Bud," Aidoo creates Yaaba as the embodiment of the invisible girl, craving love and validation in a culture that spurns her existence. Her silence is no empty, passive despair; it is a rebellion against the unjust food that Mother refused to feed her; this rebellion, tragically, ends in her fall as she tries to feed her Mother. The delayed acknowledgement — "My child, my child, I thank you" — arrives too late, only underlining the quiet tragedy of unwanted children. (Aidoo, 1970, p. 113)Chughtai's "Lihaaf" reflects this theme of

female invisibility and muted desire. Starved of an emotional connection in a sterile marriage, Begum Jaan finds refuge in a same-sex relationship subtly shrouded in the metaphor of the quilt. The narrator's observations — "The elephant inside the quilt heaved up and then sat down" — encapsulate the tension between what can be hidden and what can no longer be unspoken. (Chughtai, 2001, p. 40)

In Aidoo's "The Message," the author interrogates the failure of both the medical establishment and of systems of communal support to allow for dignified mourning. Stifled with sadness and distrust, Esi roams through a world where bureaucracy has supplanted care for the individual: "Horrible things I have heard done to people's bodies. Cutting them up and using them for instructions". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 39) Her last encounter with her granddaughter's corpse concludes not with catharsis but with soundless collapse — "The old woman somersaulted into the room and lay groaning, not screaming". (Aidoo, 1970, p. 46)

Chughtai's "My Friend, My Enemy" similarly mourns the emotional estrangement of progressive movements, describing how Manto was forsaken by comrades and left to confront his breakdown alone. The narrator's realisation — "Too many things between Manto and myself have been dead for a long time" — speaks to the yawning gulf between revolutionary ideals and lived emotional reality. (Chughtai, 2001, p. 211)In all four stories, silence is not just passivity; it's coded protest. Whether conveyed through unvoiced questions, metaphoric imagery, fragmented memory or withheld screams, the characters resist by enduring, by witnessing and by surviving. To Aidoo and Chughtai, emotional collapse is not weakness, but testimony — a testament to the human toll of social and institutional failure.Through a comparison of these stories, this study not only uncovers thematic parallels between African and Indian progressive-feminist narratives but also contributes to a broader understanding of transnational literary resistance. These writers are asking the reader to listen carefully, not to that which is shouted but to that which is felt in silence. In so doing, they rewrite the politics of voice, reminding us that pain, when orchestrated through literature, can disrupt power even in its quietest forms.

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